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OO RUEH DU RUEH MR RUEH RN  
DE RUEH SB #0018/01 0071258  
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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3892  
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE  
RUEH AR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2530  
RUEH DS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2652  
RUEH RL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1145  
RUEH BY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1921  
RUEH DK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 2276  
RUEH KM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2701  
RUEH NR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 5129  
RUEA IIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK  
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1808  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000018

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. WALCH  
DRL FOR N. WILETT  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS  
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/07/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: NEW ARRESTS: POSSIBLE EFFORTS TO MANUFACTURE  
EVIDENCE OF DOMESTIC MDC PARAMILITARY TRAINING CAMPS

Classified By: Charge d'affaires a.i., Katherine Dhanani for reason 1.4  
(d).

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) An eye witness estimates that 300 security forces, including two helicopters, were used in an extensive search of three white-owned properties about 10 miles east of Harare on January 3. Members of the military, police, presidential guard and intelligence services participated in the search, which may have been to investigate allegations that the properties were being used to train armed MDC insurgents. Several hours after the search, representatives - claiming to be from the president's office - returned to apologize to the owners for the intrusion and to ask that the operation be kept quiet. In a surprising turn, police returned on January 6 and arrested two property owners and attempted to arrest a third, who later turned himself in. The three men are in police custody in Harare; the charges against them remain unclear. END SUMMARY.

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"I woke up with a machine gun in my face"  
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¶2. (C) On Saturday January 3, we spoke with Zimbabwean Graham Halston, who had spent the previous night at the home of Angus Thompson, a fellow white Zimbabwean. According to Halston, at about 3:00 am on January 3, Thompson left the home to investigate noises on the property and discovered about 20 military trucks and security forces on his property. At 5:00 am, Thompson's wife went to look for her husband, only to find five armed men sitting on her porch. The men refused to identify themselves, their affiliation, or to present a search warrant. The security forces then initiated a detailed search of the property -- even going so far as to examine each card in their game of Trivial Pursuit. Halston was staying in a guest cottage nearby and was awoken by a

soldier pointing a machine gun in his face. When the investigators found foreign currency, they handed it to Mr. Thompson and told him they weren't looking for money. Similar searches were conducted at two neighboring properties owned by Brian Baxter and John Nastead, also white Zimbabweans in their late 60s to early 70s. Each of the properties is about 100 hectares in size, and none are used for farming.

13. (C) Halston told us that the main road was blocked for several hours while the security forces investigated. He estimated that there were approximately 300 individuals involved in the search including army, police, presidential guard (who had turned their distinctive yellow berets inside out in an attempt to conceal their affiliation), and intelligence who were calm and meticulous as they investigated the property. Halston saw one helicopter land in the yard, and said the pilot had many medals and appeared to be a high ranking officer, although he didn't recognize him. Although the officials acted arrogant and threatening, no one was injured. The only items taken from the three properties were cell phones from some of the Zimbabwean staff living on the properties and five laptop computers from John Nastead's property. Just after noon, the security forces concluded their searches and took Baxter, his girlfriend, Nastead and Nastead's son to the police station for further questioning; all were released several hours later.

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Pretend This Never Happened...

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14. (C) In the early evening on January 3, representatives from the president's office returned to the Thompson property and apologized for the search and intrusion. They said that they "wouldn't take their land" if they kept quiet about the operation. They also conceded the operation had involved two helicopters and cost US\$75,000. Thompson agreed he wouldn't say anything, but said he couldn't account for his neighbors or those who had been stopped on the road and may have seen the operation underway. (NOTE: Thus far, only one article on the incident has surfaced, and it appears to be based on accounts from witnesses who were stopped on the road. The article, which is not entirely accurate, alleges the operation was led by Air Vice Marshals Henry Muchena and Martin Chedondo, who arrived in an Air Force helicopter. Chedondo is also the former director of the Military Intelligence Service. END NOTE.)

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... Until We Arrest You With "New Evidence"  
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15. (C) Around 2:00 a.m. on January 6, three police vehicles returned to the properties and uniformed police arrested Angus Thompson and John Nastead. They attempted to enter Baxter's property, but were unable to break through his gate. Baxter turned himself in later on January 6. All three are currently at Harare Central police station. When Thompson was arrested, police said they had "new evidence" to justify his arrest.

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Allegations of MDC Military Training Camp  
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16. (C) Halston, who also lives nearby, told us that the Nasteads, Thompsons, and Baxters are pillars of the community and very generous, making them the target of some envy among ZANU-PF members in the area. For years, Nastead has run an adventure retreat business on his property, renting the facility to schools, boy scout groups, and even to members of the Air Force (within the last month). Baxter, who also enjoys adventure sports, has a mountain bike trail and large

gym on his property for his own personal use. Halston heard that the ZANU-PF District counselor for the area, Saramani, told the Military Intelligence Service that Nasteed had an MDC military training facility on his property, and this allegation may have prompted the search. Halston denied press claims that Nasteed and Thompson were former members of the Selous Scouts (the dreaded Rhodesian Special Forces). He told us, however, that Thompson is a British citizen and was in the Zimbabwean police reserves and Nasteed was in the Rhodesian Air Force. We do not know if the other men have non-Zimbabwean citizenship.

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COMMENT  
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¶7. (C) The careful nature of the January 3 operation indicates that the security forces did, indeed, believe they were looking for something specific. The meticulous search and subsequent apology also implies that there are those within the government that truly believe an armed insurgency is brewing, if only the evidence can be found. While we cannot verify the cost of the operation, it was surely expensive and must have been approved at a fairly high level, and the cash to carry it out would have been authorized and allocated in advance. If Muchena and Chedondo did lead and

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authorize the operation, which is possible, it is unlikely they personally believed the properties were being used to train insurgents, particularly since their own Air Force records would have shown that Nasteed's property was recently used to train Air Force personnel. Rather, Muchena and Chedondo - or whoever authorized the mission - may have simply authorized the searches to access funds to line their own pockets.

¶8. (C) Given that regional leaders including South African President Kgalema Motlanthe have refuted Zimbabwean claims that Botswana was hosting MDC paramilitary training camps, this developing situation may be an attempt by the Zimbabwean government to perpetuate allegations of a conspiracy to overthrow it. END COMMENT.

DHANANI